

Andropov's Funeral Tuesday; Successor Choice Unclear

Soviet Chief Dies After Long Illness

From Times Wire Services

MOSCOW—Yuri V. Andropov, who ruled the Soviet Union in ill health for only 15 months, is dead at 69, the Kremlin announced today.

His death left no clear successor to take over supreme power in the Soviet Union, but tonight, in a possible clue to the outcome, the Soviet leadership named veteran Politburo member Konstantin U. Chernenko to head a committee organizing Andropov's funeral next Tuesday in Red Square.

Andropov's body will lie in state in the House of Unions from Saturday afternoon until Monday night.

Andropov died Thursday, but the Kremlin withheld announcement of the death until 3:24 a.m. PDT today, nearly 24 hours later. There was no word on his successor.

The funeral announcement said Chernenko, chief party ideologist and one of the most senior members of the Politburo, will head the funeral.

Younger Men Mentioned

The responsibility for heading the official funeral committee in the past has gone to the Politburo member who ultimately became the successor to a deceased party chief. Andropov headed the funeral committee for his predecessor, Leonid I. Brezhnev.

But it could not be learned whether today's announcement means the 72-year-old Chernenko has the inside track in the succession. If the Kremlin rulers decide to turn over the reins of power to a younger generation, the names most frequently mentioned are Gregory V. Romanov, 61, and Mikhail S. Gorbachev, 52.

Andropov, 69, had led the Communist Party for 15 months, ailing and out of public view the last six months of his leadership.

The announcement of his death ended months of reports that he was seriously ill with kidney and heart problems and suffering from diabetes. He had not been seen in public since Aug. 18, when he met with nine U.S. Democratic senators.

Kidney Dialysis

An official medical report released today said that Andropov had undergone kidney dialysis for a year before his death and that he had suffered from nephritis, diabetes and fluctuating blood pressure.

The report stated that the Soviet leader died at 5:50 a.m. PST Thursday and cited "heart and vascular insufficiency and the cessation of breathing" as the immediate causes of death.

Andropov's brief tenure was marked by a deterioration of relations with the United States and the rupture of talks between the superpowers on limiting both strategic and medium-range nuclear weapons. Relations were subject to additional strain on Sept. 1, 1983, when the Soviet Union shot down a South Korean jetliner with the loss of 269 lives.

Andropov, former head of the KGB secret police for 15 years, took the leadership of the nation of 280 million people after Brezhnev's death on Nov. 10, 1982. Brezhnev had led the country for 18 years.

Drive on Corruption

Andropov started a campaign to crack down on corruption and enhance labor discipline and had placed his proteges in many key positions of the Soviet hierarchy.

The Soviet people heard the news when a black-suited announcer read the death announcement slowly and solemnly on Soviet television. He said of the Soviet leader:

"The name of Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov, an outstanding leader of the Communist Party and of the Soviet state, a staunch fighter for the ideals of communism and for peace, will always remain in the hearts of the Soviet people of the whole progressive humanity."

After the death of Brezhnev, it took two days to announce a new party chief, although Andropov quickly emerged as the leading contender.